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## Editorial Correspondence

Washington, May 8.—Since the passage of the appropriation bill for the maintenance of the Department of Agriculture, the only measure of great importance before the committee on agriculture is what is known as the Appalachian Park Bill. The purpose of this bill is to preserve the forests of the lower Appalachian mountain region, extending from southwestern Virginia to northern Alabama, and touching besides these two states, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia. It is alleged that on account of the rapid destruction of these forests which has been going on during the past few years, every heavy rainfall in the mountains results in destructive floods, which sweep over the lowlands, washing the soil from the hillsides and utterly destroying the fertility of the valleys. In a single congressional district in Tennessee alone it is estimated that the damage done by floods last year amounted to not less than ten millions of dollars, while in every one of the states named the results were almost equally disastrous. As long as the mountains were covered with primeval forests, the rains which fell were taken up by the accumulated mould and percolated gradually into the ground, which became a reservoir from which innumerable springs were fed, and the mountain streams were steadily supplied. With the denudation of the mountains, and the fires that usually follow, the mould is destroyed, and the water that falls, finding nothing to retard its passage, sweeps down the hillsides in sudden and destructive torrents. The springs are dried up, and the streams alternate from raging rivers to trickling rivulets. It is to preserve the forests where they have not yet been destroyed, and to restore them where they have been taken away, that the Appalachian Park scheme has been devised. In order to carry it into effect it will be necessary for the government to acquire control of something like four million acres of land, and it is estimated that the cost will be in the neighborhood of ten millions of dollars. The importance of the project can therefore be easily understood, and it was to satisfy myself concerning the conditions which are said to make it necessary that I accepted last week the invitation of Hon. J. M. Moody, one of my colleagues on the committee, to visit him at his home in Waynesville, N. C., almost the center of the region which is to be included in the Park.

It is an interesting journey from Washington to Waynesville, traversing as it does the whole State of Virginia and more than half of the State of North Carolina, and is well worth the time and trouble it takes to make it, even without any special object in view. The central part of North Carolina is a pleasant and fairly prosperous looking country. The land was originally covered with forests, of course, and it still has the appearance of a wooded country; but great areas of it have been cleared, and there are some beautiful farms in the valleys and on the long slopes of the low hills. As you go further west, however, the hills become higher and steeper, and only the lower slopes and the narrow valleys are tilled or tillable. The scenery becomes more beautiful to compensate for the less utility of the soil, and the traveller catches some rare views of dales and coves and forest fringed glades as the train speeds onward.

Waynesville is in the very midst of what are called in this section the high mountains. From the door of my friend's home there can be counted scores of peaks, rising some of them more than 6,000 feet above the sea. In the beginning, to one familiar with the lofty crags and the stern ramparts of the Rockies, these wooded hills seem hardly to deserve the name of mountains. And yet the higher one climbs among them, as is the curious way of mountains, the more imposing they become, and after three or four days rambling among them, one is quite willing to admit that they are worthy of respect. They are certainly most beautiful to look upon, particularly in this springtime of the year, when the foliage is bright and new, and one may count on the same hillside a dozen shades of green, ranging from the vivid brightness of the maples to the somber hues of the pines and hemlocks, while here and there the white blossoms of the dogwood and the service stand out like a snowy tint against the darker background. On one of the hills near Waynesville,

at an elevation of 5,000 feet, has been built a summer hotel, and from its broad piazza there is certainly a most delightful and charming panorama, which one might look upon long before being satisfied to turn away.

The town of Waynesville is really on an island, for one cannot get out of it in any direction without crossing a creek or river. Typical mountain streams they are, too—crisp and clear, with a swift current, and with continuous ripples and rapids that are most pleasant to hear and to look upon. In the old days, of course, these streams were filled with fish, and even now, in the higher and more inaccessible regions they are well stocked with speckled trout and other clear water fishes.

As to the people, they are much more Northern than Southern in talk and habits and politics,—as different from the inhabitants of Eastern North Carolina as the latter are from the people of Kansas. It would almost seem as if the elevation of their country, which in the matter of field products has lifted them from the South temperate zone of their latitude into the North Temperate zone, has changed also the nature and the sentiments of the people. On the same parallel of latitude farther East the people raise cotton and vote the Democratic ticket; here at Waynesville they raise corn and vote the Republican ticket. Owing of course to the fact that there was little use for their labor, slaves were never held in great numbers in this mountain region, and so it happened that when the war came on many of its citizens were loyal to the Union, and when the war was over the majority of them found themselves at home in the Republican party. It is a curious and interesting illustration of the influence of topography and climate.

To a man accustomed to the level fields and the fertile soil of the West, as I may already have observed in these letters, it would seem to be a well nigh hopeless task to attempt to wrest a living from the clay and the sand of these apparently sterile hillsides and valleys. And yet I am told that in the neighborhood of Waynesville, the farmers are out of debt and prosperous, and the best farms are worth as much as \$75 an acre. Of course the hillside farms are worth very much less than this, and the best that the unfortunate owners of them can possibly hope is to make a bare living by the hardest labor and by the practice of the most rigid economy. That they succeed in doing even this much is due to the generous and well distributed rainfall. It is a real relief to find one farming country where the meaning of the word drouth is not understood. The annual rainfall of this region ranges from 70 to 100 inches, (from three to four times that of Kansas) and it is distributed with almost mathematical equality among twelve months of the year.

By the use of better machinery and of artificial fertilizers, the soil could of course be made more productive; but it takes money to buy machinery and fertilizers, and the money cannot be made with the farms as they are now. The people are in a good deal of the condition of the woman who would not sing in the choir unless she could have a new hat, but had no way to earn the money to buy a new hat except by singing in the choir.

Of course this country was all claimed and settled long before the system of surveying the public lands had been adopted, and every piece of real estate must therefore be described by metes and bounds. Just what this means may be illustrated by the following description which I took from one of the local newspapers, of a tract of land which was to be sold under foreclosure:

One tract of land of Pigeon River in Clyde township, adjoining the P. L. Terrell land and others. Beginning on a sycamore on the bank of Pigeon river, conditional corner between J. L. and P. L. Terrell and runs N 6 degrees W 33 1/2 poles to a stake, thence N 59 E 8 poles to a stake, thence N 41 degrees E 4 P to a stake; thence N 14 degrees W 7 1/2 P to a stake on the top of a ridge, thence N 61 degrees E 13 P to a red oak, thence N 15 degrees E 40 P to a small pine on top of the ridge, thence S 66 degrees W 24 P to a black oak Porter & Queen's S E corner, thence with Porter & Queen's line S 53 W 13 1/2 P to a blackberry; thence S 65 degrees W 8 1/2 P to a small Spanish oak, thence S 74 degrees W 12 P to a Spanish oak, thence S 25 degrees W 14 1/2 P to blackberry, thence S

38 W 22 P to a black gum at a branch, thence S 52 1/2 W 40 1/2 P to a dogwood, thence N 69 degrees W 17 1/2 P to a maple, on the bank of river, thence up said river to a maple, corner of P. G. McClure lot, thence E 18 P to a stake, thence S to a wild cherry on the bank of the river, thence up the river to the beginning. (Containing 90 acres, more or less.

(It should perhaps be explained that "P" stands for "poles," a measure of 164 feet). Compare this with the "Northeast quarter of Section 10, Town 24, Range 19," which is required to describe 160 acres of Kansas land, and you have an illustration of one of the advantages of owning property in the bulky West.

While the people of this region are in the main as peaceable and law abiding as in any other section of the country, it must yet be said that they have not altogether forgotten the gentle art of moonshining. A citizen of the town told me that while on a recent fishing expedition he had occasion to follow a stream some distance away from the usual line of travel, and in a day's tramping he stumbled upon seven illicit stills. Captain Thrasher, of Iola had some interesting experiences in this region a few years ago, and the people of Waynesville remember yet the zest and the utter fearlessness with which he raided through some of the worst of the "blockade" still sections. The name of another Kansas man is very familiar also—that of John J. Ingalls. "You are the only Kansas man I ever saw," one gentleman remarked to me, "but I feel mighty well acquainted with another one. I reckon I have read everything that John J. Ingalls ever wrote." And others spoke to me in the same strain. It was pleasant to know that in this remote region the fame of at least one Kansan was secure.

Perhaps the one town in this part of North Carolina better known to other states than any other is Asheville, and I was glad the train schedules made it necessary on the return journey to spend half of a day and a night there. It is almost wholly a pleasure and health resort. As an old colored man at the depot, in response to an inquiry as to what supported the town, remarked: "Well, in the summer we live on blackberries and air, and in the winter we live on sick Yankees." There are one or two manufacturing plants in the town, but for the most part it is made up of hotels and boarding houses. The city is most picturesquely located on several times seven hills, from the summits of which enchanting views of the surrounding mountains, with glimpses of the French Broad and Swannanoa rivers may be had, and it is doubtless a most delightful place to spend a month in the early spring, and two or three or four months in the fall. One who begins to yearn for the crisp coolness of Colorado when his flannels commence to cling uncomfortably with the lengthening summer days, can hardly understand though why anybody should look upon Asheville as a desirable summer resort, for the July and August days must be quite as warm here as they are in Kansas.

It is said that the nights are always cool, however—as they are in Kansas for the matter of that—and the change is doubtless a great relief for the people who come up from the sweltering slopes of the Southern Atlantic shores.

The most interesting thing in the region of Asheville is Biltmore, as George Vanderbilt has named the lordly and magnificent estate upon which he has expended in the last ten years some eight millions of dollars. Passing through an imposing gateway, the beautifully paved road winds in and out among low hills, covered with native wildwood for three miles, until it reaches the palace which the man of many millions has builded for the gratification of himself and of the few guests who occasionally visit it. It is a magnificent house, as may well be imagined when it is known that it was constructed at a cost of four million of dollars, and it is doubtful if any private home in America commands a more lovely view.

It lacks much of being an artistic structure though, if a country editor may be pardoned for criticising the creation of a very renowned architect. The walls are built of dressed stone, giving the smooth, blank effect which is always so detestable in a big building, and there are too many long slopes of the roof, and too many sharp pinnacles and pointed gables. It reminded me of the physics building at the University of Kansas, which I think is without doubt the ugliest public building I ever saw. But then as I do not have to live in it, and as it did not cost me any money, I presume I have no right to com-

plain. The grounds surrounding it are beautiful, however, almost beyond comparison—certainly to be compared with nothing I have seen outside of the finest show places in Europe. There are 8,000 acres in the estate, and through this princely domain the most perfect roads have been built—forty miles in all, laid out with scientific engineering skill, and constructed after the most approved fashion of modern road building. Bordering them on both sides throughout their entire length flowering shrubs have been planted, and scores of men are employed constantly in keeping them swept and garnished in a manner that would do credit to the proudest city street. In the intervals between rains they are sprinkled, so that they remain always firm and without dust.

Of course by far the greater part of the estate is in its native condition, or is being restored to that condition as rapidly as the most scientific methods of forestry can accomplish it. There are hundreds of acres of beautiful farm land, however, which is cultivated as carefully and as scientifically as money can pay and experts can plan. In addition to the ordinary field crops, there is a nursery, where every useful or ornamental bush, shrub or tree that will survive in this latitude is grown and kept for sale. There are great truck patches, from which the vegetable markets of Asheville are largely supplied. There is a dairy, where from 150 to 200 Jersey cows, every one of them pedigreed like a queen, are kept, in quarters that may fairly be called palatial, and the milk and cream and butter from which are sold from wagon to the housekeepers of Asheville. There is a poultry yard, where blooded hens to the number of several hundred lay the eggs which Asheville boarding houses serve to their customers. It seems a little odd to think of George Vanderbilt, multimillionaire, as a peddler of milk and butter and eggs and garden "sass," but that is exactly what is transpiring down here on this princely estate. It is hardly likely that the gross revenue from these mercantile transactions reaches anything near the cost of production; and still it is a fact that the Biltmore products sell for a higher price than any of the surrounding farms. The people insist that this is not because they are Vanderbilt's, but because his milk is of a better quality and cleaner than anybody else's; that his butter is of a higher grade; that his eggs are dated so that the purchaser knows exactly the age of every one he buys; that his garden truck is marketed in better shape, and that the man who buys a cord of wood from him always gets a cord of wood. And these things may well be true.

While there are but 8,000 acres in what may be called the home estate, Mr. Vanderbilt owns another tract nearby which comprises 112,000 acres. This he maintains as a fish and game and forest preserve. The only building on it is a hunting lodge, erected at the trifling cost of \$200,000. The boundaries of this preserve are patrolled constantly to protect it against poachers, and the result is that it is fairly alive with all the game which the country affords. An interesting illustration of the self-preservation instincts of wild animals is afforded by the statement of the native hunters, who allege that whenever a deer finds himself hard pressed, although he may be miles away, he heads straight for the Vanderbilt preserve, having found out in some mysterious way that once there he is safe from pursuit. And so it happens that Mr. Vanderbilt gains the proprietorship of a vast amount of game which does not primarily belong to him.

It is of course impossible for an outsider to get even an approximate estimate of the expense of maintaining this great establishment. Some idea of it may be gained, however, from the fact that the superintendent is furnished a house to live in, and paid a salary of \$15,000 a year. The butler receives an annual stipend of \$7,500 a year. The clergyman who officiates at the little chapel which has been erected for the spiritual consolation and education of the employees, is paid an annual salary of \$6,000—a consideration which doubtless made it easy for him to recognize the invitation to come to Biltmore, as a clear call of duty. Altogether there are probably some 600 or 700 men on the salary list, and it is fair to assume that even the extra price which Vanderbilt milk and eggs and other truck bring in the Asheville market is hardly sufficient to meet the annual outlay. Mr. Vanderbilt himself spends but little time here, coming occasionally for two or three weeks in June, and perhaps for two or three months in the autumn, so that the servants who are the care keepers of the great house, and who live in it the year round, get

a great deal more good out of it than the owner himself.

I took some pains to inquire about the local sentiment concerning Mr. Vanderbilt and the lordly estate which he has built here among these modest mountaineers, and as might be expected I found a wide divergence of view. There were some who expressed the opinion that the country was greatly the gainer on his account, by reason of the object lesson which his farm exhibited to the people and by reason of the improved stock which he introduced into the country, as well as by the employment which he gave to a large number of laborers. There were others, however, and these were the much more numerous class, who insisted that the people would be more contented and better off if he had never come among them. They say that he has raised wages beyond the possibility of the small farmers to pay, and that the products of his farm, his poultry yard and his dairy compete ruinously with the small farmers in the only market which they have, while the display of boundless wealth is disheartening to those who can never hope to attain to even a modicum of it. Mr. Vanderbilt himself is described as a rather delicate looking and modest young man, who makes himself very agreeable to those with whom he has either business or social relations. Of course only his personal friends are invited or admitted to the mansion, but on two days of every week the grounds are open, and all who come are admitted, and allowed to drive at will over the estate, with no other restriction than that they shall keep in the middle of the road. One of the few prohibitions is that no photographer or newspaper man shall be admitted under any pretext. Apropos of this prohibition, a rather interesting story is told of President McKinley's visit to Asheville. Of course a drive over the Biltmore estate was part of the program of entertainment. When the carriage came for the President he inquired, with his usual thoughtfulness, as to what provision had been made for the newspaper men who accompanied him. Upon being told that they would not be admitted, he replied: "Very well, then, if they cannot go, I will not go." It is needless to say that the newspaper men went.

Next to Biltmore the most interesting features of Asheville are the schools which are conducted there. One of these is an industrial school for girls, presided over by Miss Florence Stephenson, whose visit at Iola in the interest of her school, and whose charming address in the Presbyterian church will be pleasantly remembered by many who read this letter. It is certainly a beautiful charity which goes out into the desolate, impoverished homes of the mountaineers and gathers up some 200 girls, to be brought to the first real home they have ever known, and there taught, not only the common school branches, but to them the far more useful and necessary arts of sewing, cooking and housekeeping. Another school is located some miles out from the city on a farm of 300 acres, owned and maintained by wealthy Northern people, who send their sons here to receive their primary education, away from the temptations of the city and out in the open air. The boys are not kept prisoners by any means, but are allowed to go and come outside of school hours at their will, being required only to make a report upon honor of their conduct. The penalty of lying is to be dismissed in disgrace and sent home, and it is said that the scheme works well.

Making all due allowance for the prejudice which a dweller in the West naturally has against farming a hillside so steep that the seed has to be planted with a shot gun, it is yet certainly true that this "Land of the Sky," as the Indians poetically named it, was never designed to be a farming country. The Indians had the right idea when they fished its streams and hunted its forests for their food and clothing, and it seems a sort of pity that they should have been driven out. As a matter of fact they were not all driven out. When General Winfield Scott was sent down here some seventy years ago to move the Cherokees to the Indian Territory, some of them "hid out," and were never found, and others escaped from the stockade in which the greater part of the tribe was corralled, preparatory to their removal. When it was found out what had happened, the government made the best of the situation, and set apart a township or two as a reservation for those who were left behind, and so some 2500 Cherokees still dwell by the graves of their ancestors,

keeping up the old tribal relations, and living so far as possible in their primitive fashion. It would be interesting to bring a band of the Indian Territory Cherokees back here, and see whether seventy years of separation has wrought any change in the looks or language of those who went away and those who remained behind.

That this was not intended as a farming country, as just stated, is made evident enough by the fact that when stripped of its forest it very soon becomes wholly sterile and worthless. In the narrow valleys only can there be any hope of continued fertility. In the brief visit which I made there were disclosed evidences enough of the necessity of the measures which it is proposed by the Appalachian Park bill to have the government take. To cite one specific example, a physician of Waynesville who has been there seventeen years told me that during the first ten years of his residence there he does not remember that the principal creek which flows by the town was once beyond fording, while during the past year it reached such a stage at least twenty times. The forests which still remain must be preserved, and the hills which have been denuded must be reforested if the country is not to become waste and worthless. The destruction of the cedars of Lebanon changed into a desert the land which flowed with milk and honey. The government of the United States may well invest ten million of dollars to preserve a vast region of its own domain from a similar fate.

C. F. S.

## KANSAS CLIPS AND COMMENTS.

Fort Scott has a doctor named Carver. He probably makes a specialty of surgery.

In a dispute over a line fence between their farms Homer Beck shot and killed L. B. Foster in Osborne county.

The Independence Reporter says that all that greeted the Kansas City Commercial Club when it alighted at the Coffeyville depot was "a pleasant day."

Two ministers made the trip with the Kansas City Commercial Club and the Topeka Capital wonders "if they knew what was in the baggage coach ahead."

Cherryvale is getting ready to start up her glass factory. It will be, temporarily, the only one in Kansas, but if it succeeds others are sure to follow.

Up near Ottawa two ministers tried to settle a church row and were pelted with rotten eggs. So the bad odor which has been going up is not yet stopped.

Farrelly of Chanute is booked to succeed J. Mack Love as Democratic State Committeeman. But it was understood that love had departed from the party some time since.

A maulow lark dashed straight against the headlight of a Frisco passenger train near Pittsburg recently. The bird was killed and the glass in the headlight smashed to pieces.

With hot winds, chinch bugs, cyclones, blizzards, yet, praise the Lord, Kansas is not subject to volcanoes! A man who experiences a real volcano cannot live to complain of it afterwards.

The Topeka gold shale excitement has progressed to the point where a government expert has come from Washington to investigate. Things are coming to a pretty pass if a man cannot do a little cheerful lying without having a government official investigating.

A squad of colored Salvation Army workers has landed in Ft. Scott and say they will make Toudaloupe and gloomy Buck Run look like Beulah land when they get through. Perhaps they will but they have a tough proposition to face.

A Topeka man has been fined \$43.90 for singing in a religious assembly in "a loud and unusual voice." The Lawrence Journal suggests that possibly the reason Topeka is so touchy about her music is because of the soft and whispering tones used by the politicians there.

Oswego Independent: The hoboes who robbed Lough Bros' store were humorous cusses. They left a note saying: "We see your sines all over the country that Sels shoes makes youre fete glad, rock ballast on the track make our fete sore, we will try them, will pa you in the swete By and By."

The Holton Tribune relates that a reporter called at a farm house near there, and when he asked the lady who came to the door what her husband's politics were, she said she didn't know, but that he "is for McKinley." The couple read no newspapers and did not know of the president's death.

The statement of a hot headed Congressman that Fred Funston's victories reminded him of the deeds of Sampson with the jaw-bone of an ass, reminded Congressman Curtis of a story told on a former Congressman. The Congressman was invited to address a congregation and asked a class of boys what it was Sampson used to destroy his enemies. None knew. The Congressman seized his own jaw and asked the class what that was. "The jaw-bone of an ass," responded one bright lad.